

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MATH

## Sources

1. The American Diploma Project, 2004
2. ACT Study, Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?, 2006
3. Prosperity Partnership, 2007
4. Achieve, Inc., Do All Students Need Challenging Math in High School?

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### Why is math so important?

The more your child knows about math, the more options he or she will have in life. Studies show that higher-level math skills mean an increased ability to succeed in college and work. For example, a majority of workers who earn more than \$40,000 annually have two or more high school credits at the algebra 2 level or higher.<sup>1</sup>

### Why is middle school math so important?

Research indicates that proficiency in algebra by the end of 8th grade is critical for success in higher level mathematics classes. Unfortunately, middle school is where the cracks begin to show. Unknowingly, they enroll in a lower-level math track that proves difficult to get out of once they're in high school.

### Does my child really need to take Algebra II?

To secure a job that will eventually support a family, students will need at least 1-2 years of education or training beyond high school. Students planning to attend a 2-year community or technical college or 4-year baccalaureate institution must take a placement test in math. Those who don't pass must enroll in remedial, or "pre-college," classes. Students don't receive credit for pre-college classes, but they do have to pay for them. That means paying for classes your child could have taken for free in high school.

### What if my child doesn't plan on going to college? Does he/she still need math?

In today's world, math is no longer just for college-bound students. A 2006 study by ACT examined the skills needed to succeed as a freshmen in college and compared them to skills needed for job-training programs that earn a sufficient wage to support a family of four. ACT found that whether planning to enter college or workforce training programs after

graduation, high school students need to be educated to a comparable level of math skills in algebra, geometry, data analysis and statistics.<sup>2</sup>

### But I didn't need math for my career, so why does my child?

The workforce of the 21st century is not the same as it was even a decade ago. Nationwide, the number of jobs requiring technical training is growing five times faster than other occupations. Here in Washington, our state leads the nation in jobs for people with bachelor degrees in science and engineering, but is 38th in the number of students graduating with these degrees.<sup>3</sup> And according to the Associated General Contractors of America, electricians, pipe fitters, sheet metal workers, draftsmen and surveyors need algebra, geometry, trigonometry and physics to be successful on the job.<sup>4</sup>

### What if my child just isn't good at math?

While it's true that some students may *like* math more than others, *all students are capable of learning math at higher levels.* Some students may be more successful in math if it is taught in a more hands-on way. Increasingly, career and technical education programs offer rigorous math- and science-based programs in pathways such as nursing, veterinarian sciences, computer programming and robotics. To make sure your children keep all of their options open, make sure these courses cover skills through advanced algebra and geometry.

### What can I do to make sure my child is well prepared in math?

Studies show that having high expectations has a great impact on student success, so be sure to encourage your child to take the highest level math possible. Actively participate in your child's course selection each semester and encourage them to take math all four years of high school. If your child struggles in math class, ask the teacher about after school support programs or online tutorials. Being involved can make a world of difference!